Melrose Historic and Endangered Sites – Cue Sheet

Begin your tour at Villa Heights Park, 2750 Hoover St NW. Parking is available. Endangered/extinct historic sites identified by the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation are red icons; other sites of interest are blue, and route advice notes are purple. This area was a streetcar development on the route that connected Roanoke and Salem. You will see turn-of-the-(twentieth)-century American Craftsman-style bungalow, American Foursquare, and Cape Cod style homes.

Villa Heights Park, 2750 Hoover St NW

Neighbors remember playing in the Villa Heights Recreation Center in the last decades of the 20th century. One of the few remaining antebellum homes in Roanoke, it was constructed in 1835 as a simple two-story brick home. The Comptons embellished it in the Colonial Revival style in the early 1900’s. The Batemans deeded it to the City of Roanoke for use as the Villa Heights Recreation Center. Because of urban renewal and red-lining, primarily African-American children played there from 1958 until it closed in 1999. In 2011, a fire damaged the roof. The City is currently seeking proposals for its sale and redevelopment.

South on Clifton St NW
Right on Crescent St NW
Right on Forest Ave NW
Left on Forest Park Blvd NW
Forest Park Academy, 2730 Melrose Ave NW

Designed in the Italian Renaissance Revival Style and constructed in 1928, Forest Park Academy is one of Roanoke’s finest public architectural landmarks and exemplifies what historians hope for endangered historical sites. Large antique font inscription of FOREST PARK SCHOOL heightens the Gothic architectural flavor of the frontispiece. Cast-concrete tablets feature a man with holes in the soles of both shoes, sitting and reading a book. During the desegregation of Roanoke Public Schools in the early 1970’s, 40 African-American students were bused from Forest Park to Fairview Elementary. In 2009, the school was repurposed into an Academy for under-credited, over-age students who need additional assistance to earn their high school diploma. More than 1,000 students have graduated since opening in 2009.

Continue south through the parking lot. A narrow asphalt path leads up to the Melrose Library. Turn left across the grass through the park to the cistern building of the former Nestle Brook Mansion.

Nestle Brook Mansion, 2417 Salem Turnpike NW

Once on the ‘endangered’ list of historic properties, Nestle Brooke, an 1850 brick home, is gone forever. Nestle Brooke was unusual in that the chimneys were built entirely within its outer walls. The high-quality brickwork and other characteristics suggested that the builder was J. C. Deyerle, a prolific brick mason who lived in Salem. A previous owner, Daniel Yates, had plans for a lake (not built) and a driving track for carriage horses (built where Forest Park School is now). William H. “Uncle Billy” Horton bought Nestle Brooke in 1901 and lived there with his wife until their deaths (1941 and 1970). More recently, a great-nephew of Horton gutted the building and sold it, and in 2014 it was razed, leaving only the small outbuilding in the back. (Photo: Library of Congress, 1930)
Continue through the park to the corner of Salem Turnpike and 24th St. Use the sidewalk to stay on the west side of 24th St and go north to Fire Station No. 9.

**Fire Station No. 9, 514 24th Street, NW**

*Fire Station No. 9 (1929) is another example of a successful renovation. The station closed in 2010, and reopened in 2017 as home to The Peacemakers, Inc, a nonprofit whose mission is "to end the senseless violence and murders throughout Roanoke and to work towards systemic change".*

Retrace your path south on the sidewalk back to the corner of Salem Turnpike and 24th St.

Cross 24th St and stay to the left of the chain link fence to access the road that almost meets the sidewalk.

Continue northeast on Salem Turnpike NW

Left on 23rd St

Left into the alley

**McClanahan Cemetery**

*At the end of the gravel alley off of 23rd St NW, push your bike to the top of the hill to see the graves of Col. Elijah McClanahan and his wife Agnes Strother Lewis, prominent Roanoke Valley settlers. McClanahan served in the War of 1812, was a justice and then a sheriff of Roanoke County, and owned a large farm including this cemetery and what became the Villa Heights Recreation Center (point #2 on this tour).*

South on 23rd St

Left on Salem Turnpike NW

Continue northeast through the parking lot

Left on 22nd St NW

Right on Melrose
Watch for traffic coming around the curve when you come out onto 22nd St, then follow 22nd to turn right onto Melrose. As you pedal down Melrose, you’ll pass the old Fizer Funeral Home, a white building across the street from Melrose Park. Fizer Funeral Home was one of two black-owned funeral homes in Roanoke.

**Paradise Cathedral COGIC, 1301 Melrose Ave NW**

*Competition between the Methodists and the Baptists in the early 1920’s resulted in two nearly identical churches on Melrose, just one block apart. The Methodist church (1922) lasted until the 1990’s. African-American children attending Melrose Elementary School, which lacked an auditorium, walked the two blocks to use the church sanctuary. Paradise Cathedral Church of God in Christ (COGIC) purchased the building in 2005 and has been renovating it ever since. The result is a stark contrast between this building and its derelict twin.*

**Holiness Tabernacle COGIC, 1130 Melrose Ave NW**

*Two nearly identical churches on Melrose, just one block apart, suggest competition or collusion between the Methodist-Episcopalian and the Baptists. The Baptist church (1924) originally outshone the Methodist church with stained glass and ornamentation, but today the former Methodist church, renovated by Paradise Cathedral, is in far better condition. The most recent occupant was Holiness Tabernacle Church of God in Christ (COGIC).*

Right on 10th St NW

**Moorman mansion, 621 10th St NW**

*This property was part of the land grant to Mark Evans, the first Settler of Big Lick. Rev. Uriah Powers was moving to a colder climate for his health. He stopped in the area to visit an old friend and stayed on to pastor the Presbyterian Church, and built this frame house in 1844. He gained wealth and success through farming.*
Captain Robert Moorman, a Confederate soldier, bought the house and land in 1870. When the Melrose Land Company formed in 1889 for development of the area, Captain Moorman reserved the mansion house and several acres for his homestead. The home has had several owners, at one time providing offices for two physicians.

Retrace your path north on 10th St NW
Left on Madison Ave NW
Right on 11th St NW

**Rugby Gargoyles, 1150 11th St NW**

The Melrose-Rugby neighborhood was first a streetcar suburb on the new Salem-Roanoke streetcar line in the 1890’s. The Rugby Land Company installed the Rugby gargoyles that flanked the gateway of the new development, where lots sold for $2 down plus $2/week. At the time, the area was occupied by predominantly white people. After World War II, urban renewal and redlining enticed whites into the county and drove African-Americans west into the Melrose-Rugby neighborhood.

Continue north on 11th St NW
Right on Grayson Ave NW
Right on Lick Run Greenway
Right on Quarry Rd

**Washington Park House, 300 Orange Ave NW**

The vacant, deteriorating brick house in Washington Park (ca 1837) was on the Great Road through the valley (now Orange Avenue), possibly the home of the pioneer Mark Evans’ son Peter. Peter Evans had a mill and spring house nearby. The land passed through several owners, and Charles Lukens operated it as Roanoke’s first dairy. Legend says Lukens met young Lucy Williamson (of Williamson Road) retrieving stray cattle, and they were married in 1893. The City purchased the property in 1922. A
tarpaulin partially covers holes in the roof and the western wall has a large crack. The cabin is wrapped in cables and orange netting.

Return north on Quarry Rd
Left on Lick Run Greenway
Right on Grayson Ave NW
Left on 14th St NW
Right on Carroll Ave NW into Eureka Park

*Carroll Ave NW goes into Eureka Park and ends in a parking lot. Use the paths to continue through Eureka Park and resume Carroll Ave NW.*

Right on 20th St NW, follow the street behind the water tower
Continue straight onto Delaware Ave NW
Left on Lafayette Blvd NW
Right on Clifton St NW